

DANCE

By Valerie Sudol

Symphony Hall launches revival with school series

Symphony Hall in Newark has been known as a good setting for dance since the early '20s, when the first European companies to tour internationally appeared there.

In recent seasons the 3,600-seat theater, now city owned, has had little to offer dance audiences in its limited classical bookings, but its recently appointed marketing director wants to change all that. Philip Thomas, formerly on the staff of the state Council on the Arts, is an avowed dance fan who has launched a long-term campaign to put Symphony Hall back on the itinerary of today's major dance troupes.

The first dance series hosted by the hall in several years, a three-part program for school groups beginning March 31, is intended to lay the foundation for a calendar of public performances next year, Thomas said. Running through May, the "Dancetime" series offers students in New Jersey districts concerts by three professional companies working in ballet, modern and ethnic idioms.

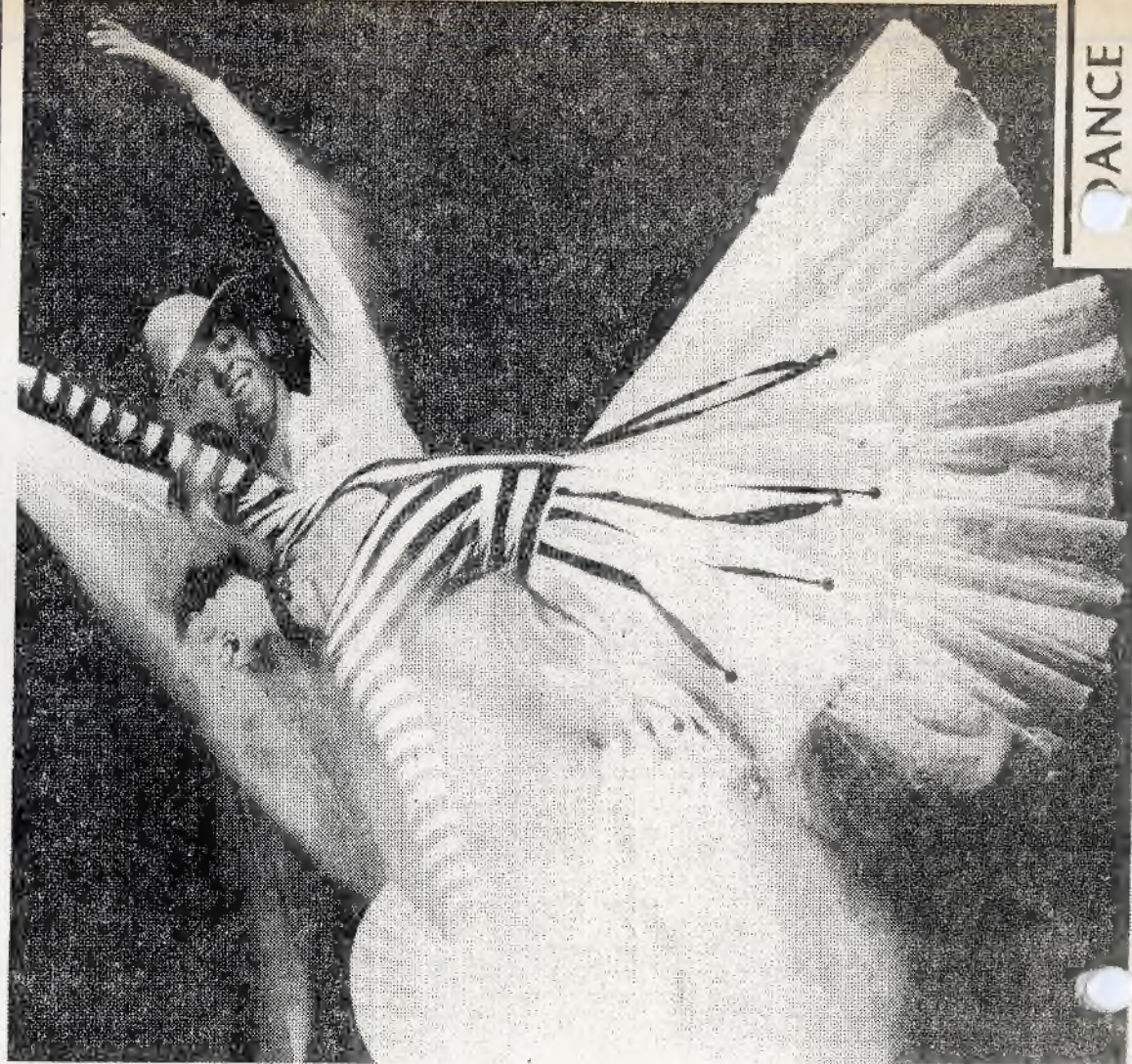
"When you look at what the hall was *not* offering, dance was what immediately came to mind," Thomas said.

"That seemed a shame since the wood floor and the well equipped technical machinery make Symphony Hall a good place to present dance."

The school series is designed in part to guarantee strong attendance by groups, with attractively low ticket prices of \$3 per student. The series begins March 31 with a setting of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana" by the New Jersey Ballet, offered with accompaniment by the 75-voice Masterwork Chorus of Morristown. Concerts April 20 and May 25 respectively feature the Philadelphia Dance Company (Philadelphia), and the Ballet Hispanico of New York.

"These are all fully staged concerts, not the lecture-demonstrations more usually presented for schoolchildren," Thomas said. "We wanted to give the kids exposure to a variety of choreographic styles, so we chose a ballet company, a modern troupe and a company that does contemporary pieces with strong ethnic influences."

The choices also were made to include major troupes from adjacent dance communities in New York and



Geoffrey Holder's 'Danse Creole' is among works in the repertory of the Ballet Hispanico of New York

DANCE
THIS WEEK

Dance Is Returning to Symphony Hall

By RACHELLE De PALMA

NEWARK

THE art of dance is finding its way back to Symphony Hall here, and the Philadelphia Ballet will perform Wednesday morning as part of a new series for student audiences.

Built 58 years ago as a Shriners' mosque, the hall was a regular tour stop for European dance companies in the 1920's. But in the years that followed, it ran into hard times, and dance was less and less offered.

In 1976, the hall was closed, only to

reopen a year later under a new administration with brave words and noble plans. Since then, it has been relatively successful in keeping up with the demands of a changing art world, but has never quite regained its earlier affinity with dance. For the last several years, it has had little to offer dance audiences.

Seeing the theater's insufficient dance program as a major weakness, Philip Thomas, its marketing director, prescribed an accelerated campaign to bring dance back. At the same time, plans were in progress to increase the hall's calendar of student offerings.

"It seemed only natural to combine

these two ideas," Mr. Thomas explained.

As a beginning, Symphony Hall recently introduced its dance series for young people. This three-part festival, consisting of fully staged performances by professional companies working in ballet, modern and ethnic idioms, is offered to students in grades 4 through 12.

The initial presentation, on March 31, was the New Jersey Ballet's performance of "Carmina Burana," a scenic cantata of medieval verse by Carl Orff. More than 1,200 students from more than a dozen school districts in the state attended.

The series continues Wednesday with the Philadelphia troupe and again on May 25 with the Ballet Hispanico of New York.

Edna Thomas, a Symphony Hall board member, said that the plan to form a partnership between the theater and the neighboring school districts began taking shape almost three years ago.

"Faced with reduced budgets, many schools were forced to eliminate art programs," she said. "While our ongoing mission is to revitalize the cultural offerings at Symphony Hall, we saw the dance series as a supplement to school art programs. What finer way was there to introduce youngsters to the arts than through dance?"

"For our maiden series, we drew upon dance troupes from the tristate area," Mr. Thomas said. "We also selected companies that concentrate in different mediums — classical ballets, ethnic and contemporary — to acquaint children to a wide spectrum of dance forms and cultures."

Mr. Thomas said he believed that the series would help develop dance audiences in New Jersey, encourage children who had cultivated an interest in dance to enroll in a dance school in the state and provide another opportunity to showcase New Jersey's many dance companies.

An expanded dance series, as well as others for music and drama (depending on available funds), are in the forecast.

Next year, Mr. Thomas hopes to increase dance performances from three to six, scheduling them all on Fridays so that the companies can be held over to present evening concerts for the public.

"We look at ourselves as supporting the presentation of dance in New Jersey," he said. "At some point, we plan to feature all of the state's nascent as well as major dance companies. What we still need to do is to come to an agreement with the hall's theatrical unions, which require live musical accompaniment for dance concerts."

Jerome Hines, chairman of the Symphony Hall board, sees a strong need for a resident dance company.

"The New Jersey Symphony, the New Jersey Opera and the Theater of Universal Images have all made Sym-

phony Hall their home," he said. "And the Newark Boys Chorus plans to take up residency here sometime soon. We want exactly the same situation for dance."

Wednesday's program will include four diverse works performed in the modern, contemporary and neo-classic dance idioms. Among them are the light-hearted "Bach O'Vivaldi," choreographed by Bernard Lias, and Louis Johnson's "Forces of Rhythm," a piece popularized by the New York-based Dance Theater of Harlem.

On May 25, the 12-member Ballet Hispanico will perform four expressive pieces that combine traditional Hispanic dance forms with modern American dance. The program includes the graceful "Caribbean Suite," with its buoyant, yet realistic view of Latin culture, and Mr. Johnson's vibrant "Echoes of Spain," a unique blend of Spanish flamenco and American jazz styles that culminates in a final, dramatic pas de deux.

The company also will present Geoffrey Holder's "Danse Creole," based on Caribbean rhythms, and jovial "Fiesta En Vera Cruz," which is reminiscent of life in the fishing villages lining Mexico's southern Gulf coast.

Ballet Hispanico, founded in 1970 by Tina Ramirez, is a national dance company that perpetuates the traditions of Spanish-speaking people in America.

Four professional choreographers from northern New Jersey have each received a \$3,000 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts

New York Times

—NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 1983—

\$1.50 beyond 75 miles from
except on Long



Karin Still and Carlos Shorty in "La Valse"